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PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997*

MAJOR PROGRAMME VI. REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Programme 34. Regional cooperation for development in Western Asia

1. The preparation, format and content of the medium-term plan and its revisions are governed by the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/PPBME Rules/1(1987)).

2. Regulation 3.11 provides, inter alia, that the medium-term plan shall be revised as necessary every two years to incorporate required programme changes and that the proposed revisions shall be as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the intergovernmental organs or international conferences since the adoption of the plan.

3. The revised programme 34, Regional cooperation for development in Western Asia, replaces the narrative of programme 34 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 and issued in document A/45/6/Rev.1. The revised programme is to be reviewed by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia at its sixteenth session.

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* After adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, the complete revised medium-term plan will be issued in final printed form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/47/6/Rev.1).

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4. The following text replaces the text of programme 34 contained in A/45/6/Rev.1, the underlined portions of which indicate revisions or additions, including the addition of new paragraphs, and the bracketed portions of which indicate deletions. Because the revisions are extensive, this format differs from that presented for other programmes so as to facilitate review.

Programme 34. Regional cooperation for development in Western Asia

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PROGRAMME 34. REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN ASIA

A. Programme

1. General orientation

34.1 The general mandate for the programme emanates from Economic and Social Council resolutions 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973 and 1985/69 of 26 July 1985, which established and amended the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

34.2 The overall goal of the Commission is to initiate and facilitate concerted action for the economic reconstruction and development of the region, to raise the level of economic activity in Western Asia and to maintain and strengthen the economic relations of the countries of that area both among themselves and with other countries of the world. This includes emphasis on an integrated approach to development by dealing with the social aspects of development and the interrelationship of economic and social factors taking into consideration recent and ongoing developments in the region and elsewhere, for example, the Persian Gulf crisis and its effects, European unification and the evolution in Central Europe and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

34.3 The general objectives of the programme are the following:

(a) To promote economic and social development through the promotion of regional and subregional cooperation and integration;

(b) To promote self-reliance in the region through the fostering of technical and economic cooperation among its countries;

(c) To serve as the main general economic and social development forum within the United Nations system for the ESCWA region;

(d) To exercise team leadership and responsibility for coordination and cooperation with regard to the relevant economic and social activities of the United Nations system within the ESCWA region;

(e) To act as a "think tank" contributing to the enrichment of development literature in view of the distinctive position of ESCWA in that domain among the various regional and national organizations in the Arab region, and to consolidate change, inter alia, as regards implications of war and peace in the region;

(f) To further the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas of the region affected by war and other forms of armed conflict;

(g) To formulate and promote development assistance activities and projects commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region and to act as an executing agency for relevant operational projects.

34.4 The sharp decline in oil prices throughout most of the 1980s has led to a decline in the financial resources available for development in the ESCWA

region. The ensuing recession in Gulf Cooperation Council countries has resulted in a decline in the flow of capital to the rest of the region and a reduction in workers' remittances as well as return-migration of workers from labour-importing to labour-exporting countries in the region. Development in the region was hampered by unfavourable global economic developments, coupled with military conflicts and political instability. These obstacles to development were exacerbated by the Gulf crisis, which produced massive destruction of the economic and social infrastructure in and suspension of oil production and exports from two member countries; great loss of human life and suffering; disruption of trade channels and flows; and reduced demand for labour and capital flows. The armed conflict between Iraq and Iran lasted for about eight years, until a cease-fire took effect in August 1988. The conflict in Lebanon and the struggle of the Palestinian people for their human rights and self-determination have still to be resolved. The situation continues to divert resources - both human and material - away from economic and social development. This is reflected in the size of defence budgets, which strain the limited resources of many ESCWA countries and contribute to the rapid deterioration of the external debt position of some member countries. The social consequences of these conflicts have been enormous and are reflected in deteriorating standards of living, lower incomes, high disability rates, the displacement of segments of populations, the destruction of property and the problems of social adjustment to changes in traditional norms and codes.

34.5 The economies of most member countries continue to be characterized by an unbalanced economic structure. In the case of the oil-producing countries, this is reflected in the dominance of the oil sector; hence, energy stands to be a major issue that ESCWA continues to address. In the more diversified economies, the commodity-producing sectors have languished over the years in comparison with a growing services sector. In this connection, no real growth in the manufacturing sector has taken place. The share of local output in meeting total demand for manufactured goods has, in fact, been decreasing over the last decade. Similarly, food security in the region is vulnerable owing to a weak agricultural sector. To a considerable extent, this is due to water scarcity. Given the aridity of the region, conservation and rational use of water becomes an issue of extreme importance. Yet many other factors contribute to this problem: degradation of the natural resource base, inadequate physical and social infrastructures, low technological levels and the largely unfavourable socio-economic environment under which agricultural production is undertaken. Apart from the above, it is relevant to note the scope that would appear to exist for the expansion of food supplies through further development of marine resources.

34.6 The economies of the countries of the region are also characterized by a high degree of dependence on the world economy. The region is, therefore, extremely sensitive to [interaction] changes in the world economy. In this connection, the small size of the domestic market of individual ESCWA countries renders industrialization highly dependent on export-oriented strategies. This, in turn, implies the need for more dynamic trade relations among the ESCWA countries themselves and between the ESCWA countries and developing countries in other regions. Development of both the industrial and agricultural sectors is closely linked with international trade through their dependence on the outside world for virtually all machinery and equipment and a large component of intermediate products. The interdependence between

agricultural development and external trade is also evident in the region's critical dependence on food imports, the dominance of agricultural raw materials in the export trade of the non-oil economies of the region and the fact that trade provides an outlet for surplus agricultural produce.

34.7 The possible medium- and long-term impact on the region of two important international economic developments needs to be stressed. The first is the rapid advance in technology, particularly micro-electronics, biotechnology and the development of new materials. [The second relates to the increasing trend towards the application by the industrialized countries of protectionist policies towards developing countries, including those of the ESCWA region.] The second relates to the trade relations between industrialized and developing countries, including those of the ESCWA region. In this connection, the impact on ESCWA countries of the measures envisaged by member countries of EEC for further consolidation of their markets and their economic policies in 1992 will need to be followed closely. So will developments in the countries belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States and in Central Europe.

34.8 In the field of science and technology, the main problem continues to lie in the weakness of the scientific and technological base, particularly in terms of research and development, technology transfer and highly specialized scientific manpower.

34.9 Environmental concerns will play an increasing role in the efforts of the region for sustainable development. Issues such as desertification, industrial waste management, surface- and ground-water pollution, urban environmental considerations, human ecology, global warming, climatic change and severe pollution caused by the recent Gulf war will have to be addressed. The ESCWA work programme will be reviewed comprehensively with a view to identifying environmental problems that require attention and initiating activities in areas related thereto. The environmental dimension will also need to be brought to bear in choosing to develop modern non-pollutant rather than smokestack industries.

34.10 Structural weaknesses and deficiencies in the database remain a major impediment to the secretariat's work and to the formulation of effective development policies by member countries, hence the urgent need to intensify efforts to remedy this shortcoming at all levels and in all sectors.

34.11 Efforts to further regional economic cooperation and integration were increasing prior to the Gulf crisis, at least at the subregional level, with the creation of two subregional groupings, namely the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Cooperation Council. [Greater efforts are, however, needed to promote regional cooperation in view of the future challenges facing the region.] The Gulf crisis has had an adverse impact on the climate for cooperation. Renewed efforts are required to deal with the political, economic and social effects of the war and with the added problems that have resulted.

34.12 In the light of the above, and in addition to the problems already mentioned, some of the key issues and problems to be addressed during the medium-term plan period will include rehabilitation and reconstruction of war-affected areas, economic restructuring, the transfer of technology,

employment, urbanization, population dynamics, rural poverty, housing, particularly low-cost housing, social welfare, particularly with regard to the handicapped, the changing role of the family, women in society and the new social structure. Other key issues and problems with which the region must come to grips and which are, in varying degrees, directly and indirectly linked with ongoing developments and changes in the oil sector, are the following: the return-migration of workers; external indebtedness and the balance-of-payments deficit in a number of the countries concerned; [and the uneven distribution of income] and the development gap between member States. A peace agreement and a concomitant reduction of hostilities in the region would have major implications, both economic and social. The prospect of a consequently changed climate calls for study of the adaptations that would be needed in approaches and programmes in the above-mentioned sectors, with a view particularly to resource reallocation and expanded regional cooperation. Moreover, in the short term this review of the implications of war and peace needs to be geared to support of the ability to negotiate, with recourse to technical assistance where necessary, drawing on the ESCWA database.

34.13 The overall responsibility for the elaboration and implementation of this programme is entrusted to the secretariat of ESCWA.

2. Overall strategy

34.14 In accordance with the terms of reference of relevant legislation and with its objectives, ESCWA, as a multidisciplinary body, is working to achieve coordination among the plans and programmes of its member States in the [various] fields of economic and social development and for the development of regional cooperation among the States of the region. Most of the activities under this programme will be of a regional or subregional character, with country-specific activities where appropriate.

34.15 In order to meet the objectives of the programme, the secretariat will carry out the following functions:

(a) Provide substantive secretariat services and documentation for the Commission and its subsidiary bodies;

(b) Assist the Economic and Social Council, upon request, in discharging its functions within the region in connection with any economic and social problems; [including problems in the field of technical assistance];

(c) Carry out and sponsor research, studies, surveys and plans of action [and technical studies] on socio-economic development problems of the ESCWA region;

(d) Establish and develop a statistical and information database, which involves collecting, evaluating, entering and disseminating economic, social, technological and statistical information, as appropriate;

(e) Organize expert group meetings, [ad hoc] intergovernmental meetings, seminars and training workshops and conferences;

(f) Provide technical assistance and regional advisory services, upon request, to member States of the Commission;

(g) Contribute to the planning, organization and execution of technical cooperation and assistance programmes;

(h) Coordinate and cooperate with other units and bodies of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, in particular the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and its specialized agencies, the Gulf Cooperation Council and other regional groupings;

(i) Highlight the benefits of regional cooperation through the media in order to influence public opinion in the region.

34.16 In the context of coordination and cooperation with United Nations organizations, the ESCWA secretariat maintains close relations with FAO through its joint ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division. It also maintains close working relations with the secretariat of UNCTAD. New working arrangements are being developed with UNIDO, UNESCO and ILO, in order to continue and strengthen cooperation in activities relating to industry, computer applications and human resources development, including the disabled.

34.17 Closer cooperation is also envisaged with global secretariat programmes such as the Department of Economic and Social Development at Headquarters, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, the Centre for Human Rights at Geneva and UNDP, with a view to avoiding duplication, ensuring complementarity and optimizing exchange of information. At the same time, efforts will continue to further coordination through joint programming of activities with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), UNCTAD and UNEP.

34.18 In the implementation of its population and women-in-development subprogrammes, ESCWA will maintain and strengthen its existing cooperation with UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women for support as regards research, seminars, training, studies and other forms of technical assistance.

34.19 ESCWA carries out a number of multidisciplinary technical cooperation projects in a variety of substantive areas with UNDP, [in support of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, industrial entrepreneurship, engineering infrastructure, micro-electronics and informatics, energy and human resource development] UNFPA, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other sponsoring entities. Such cooperation will continue and efforts will be made to identify further projects in areas of priority to the region [and to seek UNDP support, either through direct funding or cost-sharing] for which support will be sought, either through direct funding or cost-sharing.

3. Subprogramme structure and priorities

34.20 ESCWA will continue to deal with other issues covered in the current plan, all of which are oriented towards the attainment of the main objective

of the Commission, namely, regional cooperation for development. Within this overall objective, the subprogrammes have been reorientated to address continuing issues as well as new ones arising in the light of recent global and regional developments.

34.21 The programme on regional cooperation for development in Western Asia will consist of the following subprogrammes:

Subprogramme 1. Food and agriculture

Subprogramme 2. Development issues and policies

Subprogramme 3. Environment

Subprogramme 4. Human settlements

Subprogramme 5. Industrial development

Subprogramme 6. International trade and development finance

Subprogramme 7. Natural resources

Subprogramme 8. Energy issues

Subprogramme 9. Population

Subprogramme 10. Public administration and finance

Subprogramme 11. Science and technology

Subprogramme 12. Social development and welfare

Subprogramme 13. Women and development

Subprogramme 14. Statistics

Subprogramme 15. Transport and communications.

34.22 Subprogrammes 1, 2, 3, 5, [6], 7, 9, 10 and 12 are designated high priority.

B. Subprogrammes

SUBPROGRAMME 1. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

(a) Objectives

34.23 The legislative authority for subprogramme 1 derives from General Assembly resolutions 32/172, paragraphs 6 and 7, 33/90, paragraphs 2 to 6, 34/110, paragraphs 4, 8 and 14, 43/191, paragraphs 4, 8 and 12, 44/172 and 44/236, annex, paragraphs 5 and 8; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1980/58, paragraphs 3, 5, 10 and 16, and 1987/40, paragraph 5; ESCWA resolution 71 (VI), paragraph 5; and UNEP Governing Council resolutions 8/17, paragraph 5, and 15/23, paragraphs 2 and 4.

34.24 Agricultural productivity has been increasing at low rates in most of the ESCWA countries, and has been declining in some, bringing about an increasingly acute shortfall in domestic food supplies in a situation where demand is growing, thus increasing the dependence on external sources of supply. In some countries, the situation is made even worse by the fact that agricultural exports are the major source of the foreign exchange needed to purchase production inputs and capital goods and to pay for mounting debt-servicing. Stepped-up migration from the countryside has also exacerbated the problems of urban unemployment and has increased pressure on [limited food supplies and on] services in urban centres.

34.25 The countries of the region mostly act individually without cooperation or coordination in many of the fields so essential for agricultural development, despite the difficulty of achieving success through action at the country level alone.

34.26 Economic incentives to agricultural producers in the region are generally inadequate. Major constraints on production include deficient price-incentive schemes and weak and inadequate infrastructure. Agricultural research, agricultural extension <u>services,</u> marketing, farm credit and farm input distribution are basic weaknesses in the agricultural system.

34.27 The main constraint to agricultural investment in the region is not so much inadequate resources as the limited absorptive capacity. [This takes the form of a shortage of well-prepared investment projects that combines with inadequate administrative, management and infrastructure capacity for the formulation and execution of projects.] <u>This is due to inadequate administrative, management and infrastructure capacity for the formulation and execution of projects. A shortage of well-prepared investment projects is the result.</u>

34.28 One of the major bottlenecks to increasing agricultural production in the region is the deficiency of trained personnel, particularly in the field of agricultural planning, project analysis and evaluation. No less important is the training of personnel entrusted with the execution of agricultural development projects. The capacity to absorb the flow of investment funds depends to a great extent on the <u>two above-mentioned</u> types of training.

34.29 The ESCWA countries are also prone to desertification [owing to their aridity, fragile ecological conditions and over-grazing] <u>owing to their fragile ecological conditions</u>. Scarcity of water limits agricultural, pastoral and forest production. The problem is compounded by the fact that it is also a region where ecological damage is extremely difficult to repair or reverse. It is estimated that [98 per cent of the land area] <u>most of the arable land</u> of the region is subject to one process of desertification or another, with varying degrees of severity.

34.30 Despite the agrarian reform programmes undertaken in some of the ESCWA countries, agriculture is still dominated by small and fragmented holdings, and the problems of marginal and landless farmers are still serious in many of them. Moreover, there is a wide gap between urban and rural areas in the availability of basic services.

34.31 A central problem of the agriculture sector in the ESCWA region is [that of low productivity, the result of which is] that the agricultural growth rate has not been able to match the population growth rate and the sector [still has to emerge into an era of self-perpetuating growth and expanding technology] is still far from a stage of self-sustaining growth and integration of technology into agricultural activity. Yet, sustaining population growth by feeding more people is not enough. The problem for agriculture in the region is how to contribute to broadening freedom of choice beyond the barest necessities of life.

34.32 The principal objectives of this subprogramme are:

(a) To assist the member countries in promoting agricultural and rural development by identifying major problems and obstacles, and outlining appropriate solutions [to promote awareness of the importance of regional developments and issues of agricultural development and resource use, and to impart knowledge on methods and techniques for the efficient planning and management of agricultural development and the rational exploitation of the resource potential and, in this regard];

(b) To stimulate economic and technical cooperation among ESCWA countries at the subregional and regional levels, taking into consideration the existing subregional cooperation councils;

(c) To promote [integrated] activities [to strengthen national capacities in agricultural policy analysis, agricultural planning, project analysis resource conservation, farm management and agricultural marketing and, in this context, to support the institution of an integrated system for the coordination of agricultural planning in the region by 1995, taking into consideration the existing subregional cooperation councils; to promote the formulation and implementation of comprehensive food sector plans or strategies, taking into account nutrition policies, investment requirements, links between food production and food consumption systems and the instability of farm output] aimed at strengthening the capabilities of member countries in the formulation and implementation of comprehensive food sector plans and strategies, in policy analysis, project analysis, farm management, marketing and the safe use of the agricultural base resource;

(d) To promote an integrated approach [to agrarian reform and] to rural development based on growth, equity and people's participation;

(e) To further the development of marine resources.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.33 The secretariat, in close cooperation with FAO, will assist member States in their efforts to improve and coordinate their sustainable agricultural and rural development policies and plans through research, training, meetings and technical assistance. [An integrated system for the coordination of agricultural planning in the region, taking into consideration the existing subregional cooperation councils, will be promoted by 1995.]

34.34 Training in the fields of policy analysis, planning, project analysis, resource management and conservation, agricultural credit, marketing and farm

management will be continued through the organization of workshops. [and an] An integrated framework for the establishment of a regional training network in agricultural project analysis will be formulated by 1995.

34.35 Given the importance of the agriculture sector for the region, an annual review and analysis of food and agriculture performance, policies and strategies in the region wi.l be undertaken. This will include marine resources.

34.36 The secretariat will continue its activities in the monitoring and management of arid and semi-arid ecosystems. [and a] A national plan of action to combat desertification and a specific desertification control project will be formulated during each biennium of the medium-term plan period.

34.37 Activities aimed at improving [cropping] agricultural practices will be directed towards promoting the use of appropriate technology at the small-farmer level. Special emphasis will be given to the promotion of a multidisciplinary farm management approach for small-farm development.

34.38 An in-depth analysis will be carried out of the agricultural sector and of the level, structure and characteristics of rural poverty, with a view to developing a policy and programming framework for food and agricultural production, [income-generation for the rural poor,] the alleviation of rural poverty and the reduction of malnutrition. The concept and procedures of local-level planning will be introduced with a view to improving local participation in decision-making and in more effective management of resources. Special emphasis will be given to identification of policies and measures to involve women more in decisions relating to increasing agricultural productivity and women's output and income.

34.39 High priority will be accorded to activities aimed at strengthening the technical and institutional capacity essential for agricultural and rural development. Special attention will be given to the strengthening of institutions in the areas of extension, credit, marketing and supply of inputs. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of institutional structures that permit effective responses to local conditions and problems, including safe use and management of resources [and environmental capacities] and the rehabilitation of the environment previously subjected to degradation and misuse.

34.40 Private sector initiatives will be encouraged for investment in intensive agriculture. This could be in the area of agro-processing, including by-product utilization, and in marketing of agricultural production, especially for export. Where appropriate, the private sector will also be encouraged to shoulder the major task of providing services to the farmers. To these ends efforts will be undertaken to strengthen the private sector where necessary and assist in its development.

34.41 Direct assistance will be provided during the medium-term plan period to the regional associations for agricultural credit and marketing, the Regional Centre for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and the land and rural development programme of Al-Quds Open University, while full cooperation will be maintained with all other regional intergovernmental organizations in the region.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND POLICIES

(a) Objectives

34.42 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 43/182, paragraphs 3 and 4, 43/186, paragraphs 3 and 4, 44/169, section III, annex, paragraph a (ii), 44/179, paragraphs 5 and 6, 44/236, annex, paragraphs 5 and 8, 45/199, 46/145, paragraphs 2 and 3, and 46/156; and ESCWA resolutions 93 (VIII), paragraphs 1 and 2, 114 (IX), paragraphs 1 to 3, 118 (X), paragraphs 1 to 3 and 5, 100 (VIII), paragraphs 1 to 3, 173 (XV) and 176 (XV).

34.43 The sharp drop in oil prices and revenues throughout most of the 1980s has led to a recession in economic activities in the countries of the region. The problems faced by these countries are the increasing balance-of-payments deficits, a reduction in financial resources available for development and growing debt and debt-servicing. This clearly demonstrates the danger of economic dependence of many countries of the region on the exportation of a single commodity, namely, oil, which has continued to dominate economic activities. To cope with these problems, member countries have adopted structural adjustment policies designed to sustain economic development including measures to promote subregional and regional economic cooperation and integration. The least developed member country of the ESCWA region (the Republic of Yemen) - which came into being on 22 May 1990 as a result of the unification of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic, both of which were considered least developed countries - is heavily dependent on external resources to finance development projects and a large trade deficit. [For instance, more than 60 per cent of domestic investment comes from external sources while on average exports cover only about 3 per cent of imports.] Economic recession in the Gulf region has led to a reduction in the external resources available to the countries of the region. Special attention will therefore be paid in the upcoming phase to the promotion of domestic financial resources [and to the promotion of areas of cooperation between the Republic of Yemen and other countries of the region]. Efforts to cope with the problems faced by countries of the region have been hampered by a lack of systematic economic analysis and of data.

34.44 [In view of their continued relevance, most of the objectives of the subprogramme during the forthcoming medium-term plan period are the same as those of the current plan. They will focus on the following issues:] The recent Gulf crisis underlined the significance of interdependence for the stability of the member countries and the need to forge closer and new links and to reduce disparities in levels of development, within and between these countries. The objectives of the medium-term plan will focus on the following:

(a) Contributing to the harmonization and coordination of strategies, policies and programmes of member countries in the economic and social development fields towards attaining subregional and regional economic integration;

(b) Assisting the region's least developed member country in identifying its development needs, promoting greater reliance on domestic [financial] resources and the efficient allocation of these resources, and resolving policy issues arising from unification;

(c) Disseminating information on economic and social developments in the region;

(d) Stimulating the private sector to play [a more prominent role in the implementation of development projects of the least developed country of the region, the Republic of Yemen] a more effective role in the development process;

(e) Reducing the development gap between member countries through more effective regional and subregional cooperation.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.45 The secretariat will undertake the following activities under this subprogramme:

(a) Analysis of member countries' efforts to achieve harmonization and coordination of their plans, programmes and policies. Since these activities are intersectoral, they will be undertaken jointly with the concerned divisions in ESCWA. Efforts will be made to cooperate with national and regional organizations in order to explore the possibility of the joint undertaking of studies aimed at achieving these objectives;

(b) Analysis of economic liberalization and adjustment policies pursued by member countries with a view to assessing their impact on growth, development and economic cooperation and integration at subregional and regional levels;

(c) Identification of areas of economic cooperation and coordination between the region's least developed member country and other countries in Western Asia, identification of policy issues arising from the unification of Democratic Yemen in the Republic of Yemen, and review of progress achieved. Studies related to the problems of this country will be implemented through close cooperation among the concerned divisions of ESCWA;

(d) Expansion and modification of the scope of the annual survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region by concentrating on issues relating to the promotion of regional economic cooperation in the light of the adverse effects of the Gulf crisis, together with the improvement of the database of the survey. More in-depth studies on development issues in the region will be undertaken. These studies will treat issues related to disparities in income, wealth and poverty within and between countries; causes and means of reducing excessive external dependence; and the impact of recent and ongoing changes in international economic relations on development prospects of the region, and rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas affected by armed conflict;

(e) Review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade;

(f) Proper attention will be given to identifying requirements of sustainable development.

34.46 In addition to research, analysis and the preparation of technical studies and reports, intergovernmental and expert group meetings will be organized for the exchange of knowledge and experience. ESCWA will also promote and strengthen cooperation with other regional and international organizations, and provide advisory services in various fields of economic and social development.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. ENVIRONMENT

(a) Objectives

34.47 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/53, 42/186, 42/187 and 44/226 to 44/229; and ESCWA resolutions 81 (VII) and 165 (XV).

34.48 The main environmental problems in the ESCWA region that severely constrain sustainable development and conservation of natural resources are:

(a) Land degradation, which includes changes in soil properties, soil fertility loss, waterlogging and salinization, desertification and inadequacy of water supply;

(b) Industrial pollution, which involves water and air pollution and toxic waste dumping in rivers and lakes and on coastal marine shores; and related environmental disruption caused by energy-related activities;

(c) Urbanization problems associated with rapid socio-economic development, and its negative effects on the rural environment, hygiene and nutrition.

34.49 [The environment in the ESCWA region has been simultaneously affected by the pollution of large urban and rural centres and by the negative effect of population growth, depletion of natural resources and deficiency of basic services.] The major causes of unsustainable development and environmental degradation in the region are:

(a) Deterioration of natural resources, particularly land and water;

(b) Inadequate consideration of environmental dimensions in development plans and investment policies;

(c) Weakness of existing regulatory mechanisms and administrative systems dealing with environmental issues;

(d) Insufficient public awareness about the real causes and magnitude of environmental problems;

(e) Dependence on curative solutions rather than on anticipatory and preventive environmental measures;

(f) Weakness of environmental research institutions and inappropriate research and development programmes;

(g) Lack of adequately trained manpower and scientific information;

(h) Frequent military conflicts (e.g. the Gulf war and its human and environmental destruction), which have led to the large-scale diversion of financial assets, resources of manpower and natural resources away from sustainable development.

[34.49 In the light of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, it is necessary to focus on a regional approach to sustainable development, particularly with regard to the management of natural resources. The integration of environment and resource-management policies should be based on the identification of complementary objectives and the use of policy actions that are compatible efficient and cost-effective. Water being a key element in the socio-economic development of the ESCWA region, the evaluation of specific pollutants in the management of water resources, assessment of the available technologies for, and the cost of potable water purification, municipal and industrial waste water treatment are issues of paramount importance where member countries will soon face a number of policy questions that require cooperative and joint action. Hence, the formulation of macroeconomic policies must take into account, from their conceptual stage, the net impact of such policies on environmental quality and the natural resource base of the country. Likewise, the reduction of air pollution, the recovery and reuse of residues from industrial waste, conscious energy consumption and production and promotion of non-polluting renewable energy technologies, require further cooperation for the improvement of the regional environment.]

34.50 Given these regional realities and in the light of relevant recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the Arab Declaration on Environment, Development and Future Prospects, adopted by the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (Cairo, September 1991) to reflect the views and concerns of all Arab countries to the global United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Brazil, 1992, Agenda 21), the overall regional approach towards environment and sustainable development will comprise efforts to:

(a) Have countries of the region accede to global conventions related to the environment and encourage regional contributions towards solving urgent environmental problems at the global level;

(b) Ensure conservation of land, marine, freshwater and other natural resources;

(c) Preserve biological diversity of the region, including protection of critical ecological systems;

(d) Encourage consumption policies that promote sustainable development;

(e) Assess environmental impact of development projects and limit pollution caused by wastes, including treatment and management of such wastes;

(f) Increase public awareness of the environmental and cultural heritage;

(g) Develop the legal framework of environmental protection and follow up the implementation of relevant regional agreements for the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable development;

(h) Articulate an environmental code of conduct to preserve ecosystems from military conflicts and other acts of war, including assessment reports of the consequences of such acts (e.g. environmental consequences of the Gulf war).

[34.50 The objectives of the subprogrammes are:

(a) Elaboration of effective means of preventing, minimizing or solving common problems related to environmental management, taking into account the objectives of sustainable development;

(b) Harmonization of environmental policies among member countries in response to regional and global environmental priority issues;

(c) Assessment of major environmental concerns of the region with a view to building up an information base for environmental and natural resources management policies;

(d) Identification and implementation of regional projects related to environmental questions.]

34.51 In this context, the broad objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) Promotion of sustainable development in its broadest sense to become the central goal of the secretariat's programme and project activities;

(b) Undertaking thematic programme activities that contribute to the overall regional and international efforts for understanding the dimensions of environment and sustainable development;

(c) Provision of coordination and cooperation at the regional level to enhance technical aspects of environment issues such as training, application of modern techniques in detecting environmental deterioration, application of environmental indices in cost-benefit analysis and building national and regional networks for the environmental database;

(d) Formulation and implementation of selected environmental projects with strong elements for regional cooperation.

34.52 Hence, the functions of the environment subprogramme reflect the priorities assigned to it by the Commission's relevant resolutions to conduct research and project activities in a range of technical, economic and social areas elaborated in the Arab Declaration on Environment, Development and Future Prospects. Such programme activities would necessitate initiation of a series of technical studies and country assessments to identify priority environmental problems; establish the proximate and underlying causes of environmental damage; and design appropriate policy actions or regional draft conventions, based on accurate data, and the policies and programmes for their implementation.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.53 The secretariat will concentrate its efforts on promoting regional and subregional initiatives to make sustainable development the guiding principle in the interrelated objectives of economic growth, environmental protection and sound development within the region.

[34.52 Increased attention would be given to the analysis of problems that may arise from the expected climatic change due to projected sealevel and temperature changes. Options for facing the negative consequences of these changes would be prepared for consideration by member countries. Efforts would be intensified to provide decision makers, managers, scientists and the public at large with information on the environmental problems of the ESCWA region, as joint efforts are crucial to safeguard the quality of environment in the region. Particular importance will be attached to the dissemination of the results of the Commission's activities on a biennial basis, including project implementation in the area of environment, through conferences, seminars, consultancy services, training and publications.]

[34.53 Internal collaboration will be maintained with other substantive divisions to promote work on environment and sustainable development wherever relevant within the Commission's mainstream activities through undertaking specific conceptual studies, research activities and joint activities with countries, organizations and other bodies, including such activities as training and advisory cooperation programmes comprising a number of well-defined projects.]

34.54 As such, the thrust of ESCWA environmental activities would be to:

(a) Address the environmental consequences of the Commission's programmes and operational projects;

(b) Coordinate with other regional organizations to identify and implement projects aimed specifically at environmentally sound and sustainable development;

(c) Stress the incorporation of the environmental dimension in the programme activities of substantive divisions, so as to influence environment-related behaviour on a regional scale;

(d) Focus on regional environmental priorities of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly issues such as: desertification, water, land use, hazardous waste, energy and negative environmental consequences of war, occupation and military conflicts (e.g. the Gulf war);

(e) Establish and maintain an environmental database, including compilation of relevant natural resources information;

(f) Undertake training for the Commission's staff and member countries on environmental issues through workshops, seminars and publications on environment and sustainable development.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

(a) Objectives

34.55 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 32/162, sections V, VII and VIII, 42/191, paragraph 6 and section II, 42/187, paragraphs 8 and 15, 42/184, paragraphs 14 and 15, and 44/236, annex, paragraphs 5 and 8.

[34.55 The problems addressed by the subprogramme relate to:

(a) Settlement polarization caused by inappropriate approaches to planning and monitoring practice;

(b) Institutional overlapping and waste of resources generated by existing settlements management procedures;

(c) Lack of integration between planning objectives and the needs of the population from the perspective of attaining sustainable development.]

34.56 The problems addressed by the subprogramme relate to:

(a) Abrupt growth of certain cities caused by economic fluctuations and crisis migration and resulting pressing demands on the urban structure;

(b) Inadequate institutional, organizational and managerial framework to monitor urban growth and development;

(c) Waste of resources generated by inadequate awareness of planning and design methods that are appropriate to the development stage of the countries of the region;

(d) Culturally and physically inadequate shelters and settlements, due to inappropriate approaches to design and planning of buildings and settlements.

34.57 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) Monitoring human settlements development in the region through the review and appraisal of planning and implementation policies and promoting the development and adoption of suitable planning and implementation approaches;

(b) Identifying pressures on human settlements caused by crisis migration at the country and regional levels;

(c) Assisting Governments of the region [in formulating concrete proposals for balanced human settlements development through improved coordination and management vis-à-vis planning and execution] in working towards balanced and stable settlements through appropriate responsive and dynamic planning and culturally and economically conscious building design;

(d) [Formulating and] Promoting appropriate [articulated] legislative and administrative frameworks, including measures to adapt spatial planning to

the needs of special population groups, [such as women] especially the youth and the disabled;

(e) Proposing [ways and means for the inclusion of the specific social, cultural, economic and environmental characteristics of the urban areas of the region in the planning process in the context of a sustainable development strategy based on environmentally sound human settlements practices] guidelines for urban planning and design that ensure sound development in the cultural, economic and environmental context.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.58 The secretariat will continue to collect data on human settlement indicators in order to monitor changes and trends in the existing human settlements situation. Revisions of the database will be made in order to refine its coverage and to adapt it to the changing situation in the region.

[34.58 Studies will be undertaken to assess the situation and make recommendations on the availability and utilization of resources for human settlements development with special emphasis on manpower training, energy-efficient building materials and effective use of financial resources. Planning and policy-making will be assessed with a view to promoting a balanced human settlements development. The institutional framework for this development will also be examined with particular reference to management, coordination and monitoring procedures. The two major aspects to be covered will be the formulation and promotion of polarization reversal policies and technical assistance to Governments of the region for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. Attention will also be given to the inclusion of environmental issues in plans and strategies to achieve a sustainable human settlements development.]

[34.59 Further studies on urban development will be undertaken in order to promote urban plans that take into account the needs of the different groups that constitute the urban population, including youth, the disabled, women and the elderly, as well as the transformation of the spatial, social and cultural patterns of the city. Special attention will be given to the relationship between urban land use and the spatial distribution of urban activities, such as work, residence and leisure, and to the effect of rapid urban growth in that distribution. Efforts will be made to promote the inclusion of the Islamic architectural and city planning heritage in urban development planning. The need for sound city management procedures will continue to be emphasized, with special reference to urban environmental management, provision and maintenance of public services, establishment and improvement of information systems, and appropriate legislation.]

34.59 The following subjects will be studied:

(a) The resources for human settlements development will be investigated. Special emphasis will be placed on building materials, manpower training and financial resources;

(b) The processes of planning and policy-making will be assessed with a view to the promotion of appropriate human settlements development;

(c) Modalities of technical assistance to Governments of the region need to be further elaborated for the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000;

(d) Attention will be given to the inclusion of environmental issues in plans and strategies;

(e) Further studies will be undertaken to cater for the needs of special groups in the urban environment, e.g. the disabled;

(f) Special attention will be given to the relationship between urban development and the transformation of the social and cultural patterns of the city;

(g) The need for sound city management procedures.

34.60 Further, subprogramme 4 will contribute to the multisectoral work to be carried out in collaboration with other [social] subprogrammes. These activities will be related to: (a) the family (subprogramme 13); (b) human resources development (subprogramme 9); and (c) [living standards and poverty line (subprogramme 12)] the environment and energy issues (subprogrammes 3 and 8).

SUBPROGRAMME 5. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) Objectives

34.61 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 40/169, paragraph 5, 41/182, 42/184, paragraph 15, 42/186, paragraph 11, 42/192, 43/178, paragraphs 5 and 16, 43/186, paragraph 1, 45/196 and 45/199, annex, paragraphs 62 to 69; and Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/74, paragraph 2.

34.62 Industry in the ESCWA region is characterized by a narrow range of products manufactured, a low level of specialization and a low level of capacity utilization. Complementarity in production remains limited, while little has been done to improve efficiency [, which is a prerequisite of an integrated industrial structure]. The approach to industrialization has so far been a piecemeal one, with little or no coordination among the countries of the region. The industrial infrastructure and supporting activities remain inadequate in terms of entrepreneurship, skills, transport, finance, consultancy, information and research and development.

34.63 The objective of the subprogramme is to assist Governments of the region and the private sector in each member State in their efforts to promote industrial production and productivity, to diversify and modernize industry, to upgrade industrial institutions and their services, and [further] to improve industrial development policies and mechanisms of coordination and cooperation [in this area]. More specifically the objectives include:

(a) The harmonization of sectoral, national and regional industrial plans [, with special emphasis on enhanced industrial diversification, structural adjustment, private sector and small-industry development];

(b) Facilitating structural adjustments, enhancing industrial diversification and strengthening backward and forward linkages within the industrial sector and with other sectors of the economy, with special emphasis on the private sector and small- and medium-scale industrial development;

(c) The development of human resources for industry, including the development of management and technical skills, the creation of industrial entrepreneurship and employment opportunities and the enhancement of the participation of women in industrial development;

(d) Industrial rehabilitation and assistance to existing industries, with special emphasis on war-torn and least developed areas;

(e) The development of technological capabilities and their applications under prevailing local conditions, including advanced and new technologies;

(f) Adoption of integrated industrial and environmental management and planning, including identification of perspectives for improved environmental protection, waste management and pollution control.

(b) Course of action by the secretariat

34.64 The activities of the secretariat under subprogramme 5 will concentrate on the following:

(a) In the area of industrial development policies and regional cooperation, the secretariat will [conduct detailed comparative studies on the impact of industrial development incentives] seek, in close cooperation with international and regional organizations, to formulate and implement a coherent plan of action that will stress:

(i) Promotion of the private sector, especially medium- and small-scale industries, as well as traditional handicraft industries;

(ii) Assistance to rehabilitate and modernize existing industries;

(iii) Assistance in developing managerial skills to operate under severe and fast-changing conditions in the industrial sector;

(iv) Integration of environmental considerations in industrial plans and operations;

(v) Continuous monitoring and assessment of progress in industrial development;

(vi) Due priority to be given to the special circumstances and needs prevailing in the least developed and war-torn areas of the region and the occupied Palestinian territories;

(b) A plan of action for the promotion of a coordinated approach to training and placement of trainees within the region will be developed. Studies and reports on selected aspects of industrial skill development will be produced. Training seminars in the region in such subjects as project

identification, formulation and evaluation and industrial administration and management will be organized;

(c) Possibilities for improving the institutions and industrial consultancy services in the region will be examined. The secretariat will undertake regional projects aimed at enhancing the development of training concepts and curricula, especially in the fields of entrepreneurship development and management skills. Furthermore, the secretariat will participate in the implementation of research and development projects to generate greater awareness of possibilities for increasing the participation of women in industrial development;

(d) Activities regarding the promotion of advanced industrial technologies will continue throughout the medium-term plan period. In each biennium, work will focus on new selected industries. Promotional activities will cover micro-electronics, informatics, biotechnology, genetic engineering and new materials. Studies will be carried out to identify viable regional projects based on the application of advanced technologies. Strengthening the intraregional and international technology transfer networks and mechanisms will be a particular priority issue during the second and the third bienniums of the medium-term plan;

(e) Work on industrial pollution control and waste management will continue with the identification and assessment of main problem areas. Starting in 1992, research findings will be used to formulate sectoral, national and subregional project proposals;

(f) The secretariat will promote South-South technical and economic cooperation among developing countries to enhance, inter alia, dissemination of information and know-how and the interregional transfer of experience in resource-saving technologies, the identification of projects and the preparation of project profiles;

(g) Activities regarding assistance to existing industries will continue throughout the medium-term plan period, particularly to overcome the destruction and damaging effects resulting from military conflicts;

(h) Compilation, analysis and evaluation of relevant technical, financial and marketing information for [the] identification of new [industrial] investment opportunities will also continue, as well as preparation of pre-feasibility studies and promotion of new industries;

(i) The secretariat will assist enterprises and institutions to cope with severe and fast-changing conditions in matters such as changes in oil prices and other economic indicators; changes in the labour market structure; changes in export markets; and recurrent economic and political crises and armed confrontations.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

(a) Objectives

34.65 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 38/200, paragraphs 2 (c) and 5; 39/216, paragraphs 1

and 5; 39/218, paragraph 1; 40/207, paragraphs 2 and 3; 41/165, paragraph 3; 41/167, 41/171, annex, paragraphs 12, 13, 27 and 29; 41/182, paragraph 1 (a) and (b); 41/202, paragraph 1 (b), (d) and (e); S-18/3 and 45/199; and ESCWA resolution 157 (XIV), paragraphs 2 and 3 (a).

34.66 The main problems that are addressed by the subprogramme are the following:

(a) The trade of ESCWA countries remains highly concentrated in terms of commodity composition (exports of oil, cotton and phosphates) and geographical distribution (in favour of developed countries). Intraregional trade is still modest in relation to total trade and below potential and expectations, but is of great significance in the non-oil trade of several member countries. The Gulf crisis has resulted in the disruption of important intraregional flows of goods and services;

(b) The protectionist policies applied by major trading partners to imports of manufactured and agricultural products adversely affect those exports in which the region has a comparative advantage - new items, such as petrochemicals and fertilizers, and traditional ones such as textiles, clothing and footwear;

(c) Lower oil prices, combined with rising import prices, have tended to reduce earnings and the purchasing power of exports and have caused unfavourable movements in the terms of trade;

(d) The pursuit of overall import-substitution policies has reduced the incentive to export, rendered competition a rather marginal concern and dampened the search for new markets, while at the same time it has promoted an increased reliance on non-competitive trade channels, such as trade agreements and barter deals. As a result, insufficient attention has been paid to the important determinants of exports, such as financing, qualified manpower, exchange rate policies, trade regimes and product quality and costs;

(e) Trade in the region is handicapped by the lack of information on potential export outlets and alternative sources of imports, as well as inefficient and excessive formalities and procedures and weaknesses in the trade data of countries of Western Asia;

(f) As in the case of trade in merchandise, [intraregional] trade in non-factor services is still modest, while the possibility and potential of cooperation have barely been explored. At the same time trade in factor services remains highly susceptible to non-economic considerations and factors.

34.67 The objective of the subprogramme is to assist member countries to expand and diversify their trade in goods (particularly manufactures and semi-manufactures) and services; to reduce their external dependence; to contribute to a better understanding of the issues involved in expanding and diversifying the trade of member States and to formulate policies and measures at the national, regional and global levels in an effort to bring about faster trade expansion and more balanced trade structures. More specifically, the objectives include the identification of obstacles to trade (intraregional, trade with other developing regions and trade with developed market economies) and measures to promote trade, including trade financing by 1993; the

identification of ways and means of strengthening the role of the private sector in the promotion of trade and regional cooperation by 1995 and of strengthening the trade database and improving trade facilitation by 1997.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.68 The secretariat will pursue the objectives of the subprogramme mainly through research (technical studies and reports), the organization of intergovernmental and expert group meetings and the initiation of operational activities that will emphasize a major issue in each biennium in the light of global and regional developments and guidance from member States. [Special attention and priority will be given to the promotion of intraregional trade in goods and services and identification of the obstacles that face specific categories, together with the promotion of trade with developing countries.]

34.69 During the medium-term plan period, the secretariat will focus on the following activities:

(a) Identification of opportunities and modalities for promoting intraregional trade in goods and services, review of economic structures, competitiveness and complementarity and the impact of [the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Cooperation Council] subregional groupings in this respect;

(b) Identification of opportunities and modalities for the promotion of trade and economic cooperation with other developing countries;

(c) Analysis of the trends, problems and prospects of exports of manufactured goods from the region, taking into consideration the characteristics and requirements of the markets of developed countries, other developing countries and the regional market;

(d) Identification of the impediments to trade expansion and diversification that are inherent in domestic trade promotion policies and an analysis of the effectiveness of those policies, as well as the identification of institutional support needs with particular reference to trade financing;

(e) Identification of the ways and means of strengthening the role played by the private sector in promoting export and import trade and enhancing regional cooperation;

(f) Identification of ways and means of strengthening trade information and improving the efficiency of trade facilitation measures;

(g) Monitoring of trends in the trade and payments situation of member countries and analysis of the implications of recent developments in international economic relations for this trade, including the outcome of the Uruguay Round, the single European market, changes taking place in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and in Central Europe, and the unification of Germany; and identifying opportunities for profitable trade relations on an equal basis where these present themselves.

SUBPROGRAMME 7. NATURAL RESOURCES

(a) Objectives

34.70 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 32/158; 45/181; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1983/52; 1983/54; 1985/49; 1985/52; paragraph 1; 1985/167; 1987/9; 1987/10, paragraph 4; 1987/74; 1991/84, paragraph 7; 1991/85, paragraphs 3, 5, 6 and 9; 1991/89, paragraphs 2 to 4; 1991/90, paragraphs 2 and 4; and ESCWA resolution 165 (XV), paragraph 2.

34.71 The problems addressed in the subprogramme are as follows:

(a) [Lack of thorough, quantitative and qualitative assessment of the available and potential water resources in the region, which is a prerequisite for optimum utilization and efficient allocation of these resources;] The ESCWA region consists mostly of arid and semi-arid zones. The gap between the limited water resources available in the region and the rapid population growth, with added requirements for economic and social development, is widening dramatically, thus jeopardizing water security in the region;

(b) [Absence of adequate water planning and policies that would bring about the development and conservation of available water resources;] The fact that the main sources of water for the region originate from neighbouring countries and that water basins are shared among the countries of the region undoubtedly gives rise to potential disputes. In the absence of interregional and regional cooperation, such disputes could disrupt harmonious development of the region's water resources;

(c) [Inadequate water security in the region, owing to insufficient rational development, management, utilization and conservation of water resources at the regional, subregional and national levels;] The water sector in the region is facing chronic problems emanating from insufficient rational development, management, utilization and conservation of water resources; inadequate national water planning and policies; inadequacy, scantiness and scattering of hydrological, hydrogeological and hydrometeorological data, and thus the lack of a thorough assessment of conventional and non-conventional water resources required for establishing priorities, proper distribution and allocation among the end-users; shortage of skilled manpower and expertise, particularly in areas where advanced technologies should be utilized; shortage of financial resources in many countries of the region to implement large-scale water development projects; inadequate water supply and sanitation, especially in rural and remote areas; and water pollution and contamination caused by the absence of adequate policies required for environmentally sound development;

(d) In the field of mineral resources, the lack of adequate data and comprehensive assessment of mineral resources, inadequate regional cooperation and coordination of mining activities, the shortage of financial resources in several countries of the region to obtain sophisticated technologies for undertaking mineral development projects, the inadequacy of technical capability and the shortage of skilled manpower are the most salient problems and obstacles hindering overall development of resources.

34.72 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) In the water resources sector:

(i) To increase awareness of the interrelationship between [the phenomenon of] water scarcity on the one hand, and [population, urbanization and] the process of sustainable development on the other;

(ii) To assist in the improvement and control of water quality and the proper management of water resources;

(iii) To promote interregional, regional and subregional cooperation in order to ensure water security in the region;

(iv) To establish guidelines and principles for the optimum utilization of available water resources, particularly in the case of shared water basins;

(v) To enhance awareness and knowledge about ground-water pollution and its causes, namely, leaking septic tanks, waste and toxic chemical dumps and run-off from fertilized fields;

(b) In the mineral resources sector:

(i) To contribute to the assessment of mineral resources and the development of their exploration and management;

(ii) To assist in the introduction of new and appropriate techniques for assessing mineral resources in the region and in the development of national plans for their exploitation;

(iii) To promote regional and subregional cooperation in the development of mineral resources [with emphasis on seabed mineral resources and non-metallic minerals];

(iv) To facilitate the establishment of a regional data bank for mineral resources;

(v) To promote effective management in the development of mineral resources and strengthen manpower training activities in the region.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.73 The means of action envisaged by the secretariat under this subprogramme are as follows:

(a) In the water resources sector:

(i) Collecting, processing and disseminating hydrological and hydrogeological data;

(ii) Conducting studies on hydrological-hydrogeological network distribution and parameters pertaining to water budget evaluation;

(iii) Conducting studies in water resource development, conservation and management and water resource technologies;

(iv) Organizing training programmes, technical meetings and seminars at the subregional and regional levels, in particular, on issues of low-cost and appropriate technologies and non-conventional water resource techniques;

(v) Mobilizing financial resources for water resource development in the region;

(vi) Promoting the development of adequate water resources to meet the challenging and growing demand for agricultural and domestic water supply;

(vii) Developing human resources and institutional structures for efficient water resource management;

(viii) Promoting existing and supporting new mechanisms of interregional and regional cooperation;

(b) In the mineral resources sector:

(i) Collecting, processing and disseminating data and information on mineral resources [throughout the period of the medium-term plan];

(ii) Conducting studies on the availability and management of mineral resources, including recent technologies for mineral exploration and prospecting;

(iii) Formulating training programmes and contributing to their implementation;

(iv) Organizing meetings and seminars for the improvement of indigenous technical capabilities in the mineral sector.

SUBPROGRAMME 8. ENERGY ISSUES

(a) Objectives

34.74 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 38/151, 39/173, 39/176, 40/208, 41/170, 41/212, 43/193, 45/199, 45/209 and S-18/3; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/10 and 1989/6; and the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, paragraphs 52 (b) and 1 (c).

34.75 [Given that the demand for energy in the ESCWA region has been rising and has been forecast to increase significantly over the next few decades, it has become essential that comprehensive energy plans on both the demand and supply sides (conventional and renewable) be drawn up to ensure that energy requirements are met in the most effective way.] The ESCWA region is a major supplier of oil to the world. As such, the region has the responsibility for a smooth supply of energy, provided that fair prices and stable markets are

assured. Recently, the importance of natural gas has emerged and is growing rapidly in terms of discoveries and utilization. Moreover, the potential of renewable energy resources promises to play a sizeable role among energy sources in the future. Fluctuations in oil prices have an impact on development, both in the region and elsewhere in the world. Closer coordination between suppliers and consumers continues to be an aim worthy of pursuit in the light of probable global benefits.

34.76 The recent Gulf crisis has emphasized the importance of oil in the global and regional economies. The negative impact of this crisis will have a bearing on the development process in the region for years to come. Some of the consequences of the crisis affect both the energy supply and the environment.

34.77 Regarding cooperation and coordination in the energy sector within the ESCWA region, there is scope for establishing appropriate regional arrangements in the energy sector, such as the establishment of oil and gas pipelines and the interconnection of national electricity grids. The lack of regional cooperation and coordination is still a dominant phenomenon in the region. Energy policies and planning at the national level remain, to a certain extent, weak and inefficient.

34.78 The lack of adequate energy data continues to be among the chief obstacles to the preparation and implementation of country energy plans. The energy balances drawn up by a number of ESCWA countries are not sufficiently accurate or comprehensive to serve as a basis for a reliable assessment of their energy situations. The methods used in preparing energy balances in most countries of the region also lack the data that would permit the monitoring of operations carried out between initial production and final consumption.

34.79 The excessive use of depletable energy resources and the lack of appropriate policies and measures for more efficient use of energy, which still result in substantial waste in several sectors, require that the whole question of energy consumption be analysed and ways found to raise the efficiency in energy utilization.

34.80 Activities undertaken in the ESCWA region for the development of renewable sources of energy are largely limited to research and pilot projects. Other than in a few restricted cases, such activities have not [extended to the applicational aspects of the development of new and renewable sources of energy] yet led to a wider impact on economic activity, especially as regards the energy needs of local communities under various climatic and social conditions.

[34.79 With regard to the use of non-conventional energy, particularly nuclear energy, activities in the region have so far been confined to selected research in limited fields by a small number of countries. Therefore, there is a need for a close regional cooperation through the contribution to the implementation of joint nuclear energy projects for various peaceful purposes.]

34.81 Until recently, little attention had been given to the adverse environmental effects of the extensive use of fossil fuels. Environmentally sound management of energy resources is to be thoroughly considered in

planning the activities under this subprogramme for the development of these resources in the region.

34.82 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) Suggesting new approaches for close interregional and regional cooperation and coordination of energy strategies and policies;

(b) Contributing to the linking of activities for the development of renewable sources of energy to the practical uses of relevant technologies, particularly in rural and remote areas;

(c) Contributing to the cooperation for improvement of the functioning of the existing regional organizations and the establishment of new ones;

(d) Ensuring that energy policies take into consideration the environmental implications of energy use in the different economic sectors;

(e) Increasing the awareness of energy waste and proposing ways and means for more efficient use of energy;

(f) Establishing and developing a reliable energy data bank to be used, inter alia, for monitoring the various energy-related activities in the region and disseminating relevant information among ESCWA countries.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.83 The means of action envisaged by the secretariat under subprogramme 8 are as follows:

(a) Collection, computerization and analysis of energy data and information, and their dissemination, including forecasting and projections of energy requirements;

(b) Preparation of [technical] publications on the various energy-related activities, including surveys and assessments of these activities;

(c) Organization of meetings aimed at developing energy strategies and policies and at promoting regional cooperation and coordinating activities and exchange of information on various issues of energy resource development;

(d) Formulation of training programmes in the field of energy planning at the regional and interregional levels, and participation in the organization of training courses to promote the efficient use of energy and to develop energy resource management methods, in cooperation with international and regional organizations concerned with energy issues;

(e) Conducting and disseminating studies on the impact of changing oil markets on energy policies;

(f) Conducting and disseminating studies on natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas development and their marketing prospects;

(g) Conducting studies on national electricity grids and their interconnection;

(h) Preparing and disseminating studies on the energy needs of rural and remote areas and on modalities for meeting those needs through the development of decentralized renewable energy systems;

(i) Maintaining and establishing regular contacts with national, regional and international organizations for the coordination of energy-related activities, and promoting close cooperation for the development of energy resources and their efficient use.

SUBPROGRAMME 9. POPULATION

(a) Objectives

34.84 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 39/228, 40/105, 44/213, 45/191 and 45/199; Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/81, paragraphs 4 and 7, 1991/93, paragraph 10; ESCWA resolutions 55 (V), 59 (V) and 128 (XI), paragraph 1; Review and Appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action, annex; and Recommendations for the further implementation of the World Population Plan of Action (ST/ESA/SER.A/99), 1986, paragraphs 4 to 10, 14, 15 and 18 to 35.

34.85 Although data collection activities in the ESCWA region are relatively well advanced now, the demographic analysis and research on the determinants and consequences of population trends are still weak. The population data collected in the region are not only inadequately analysed but are also not utilized for sound policy formulation. Another problem is the lack of reference material facilitating research, or the lack of access to such material, if available. Unemployment is a serious problem in the region, and even among those employed, there is a high degree of underemployment. Female employment is still at its lower level. The present labour situation in the region is affected by the implications of the Gulf crisis and the resultant changing demand for manpower within the region and return migration.

34.86 The objectives of the subprogramme are as follows:

(a) To assist Governments of the region in developing durable capabilities for demographic data analysis and to monitor population trends;

(b) To assist Governments in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of population policies; and in the integration of population variables into development plans and programmes;

(c) To promote the development of human resources; to assess continuously the developments in the labour market; to strengthen the statistical and planning abilities of the labour ministries; to coordinate labour movements between the labour-sending and labour-receiving countries; and to enhance technical education in the ESCWA region.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.87 In the field of demographic data collection and analysis, the secretariat will produce, on a regular basis, a number of demographic and related socio-economic indicators necessary for development planning and policy-making; and will analyse, on a regular basis, the demographic situation in the region, including the population movements associated with the Gulf crisis.

34.88 In the field of human resources development, the secretariat will undertake training on available computer software and elaboration of a regional model for manpower planning during the three bienniums of the medium-term plan. Imbalances between labour market requirements and educational outputs will be tackled towards the end of the period of the medium-term plan 1992-1997.

34.89 In the field of monitoring labour market developments, the secretariat will carry out [technical] studies describing the employment situation and developments in the labour market at the sectoral and global levels during the first and last bienniums. A fully computerized labour force database, comprising statistical data from censuses, surveys and current statistics, will be operational and will be continuously updated during the period of the medium-term plan.

34.90 With a view to strengthening the statistical and planning capabilities of labour ministries, the secretariat will assist the countries of the region in the establishment of labour force and employment information units within their respective labour ministries towards the end of the current medium-term plan.

34.91 In the field of population and development policies, the secretariat will undertake studies on the determinants and consequences of fertility and mortality rates and migration. The monitoring of national population policies will continue. Special emphasis will be given to action-oriented research on the integration of population variables in sustained socio-economic development and establishing a sustainable relationship between human resources and other resources.

34.92 In addition to maintaining a population reference centre, the secretariat will continue to publish its biennial Population Bulletin of ESCWA, including various research results concerning Arab population questions and the proceedings of the meetings organized by the Commission. Population data will be disseminated through computerized media. More training workshops will be organized and related training material will be published.

SUBPROGRAMME 10. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

(a) Objectives

34.93 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/198, paragraphs 17 and 18; 43/198, paragraphs 11 and 12; 44/205, paragraphs 5 and 11 to 13; 45/199, annex, paragraphs 103 to 112; and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/92, paragraph 3; and 1988/74.

34.94 The eruption of the Gulf crisis and the subsequent loss of financial and economic resources in the ESCWA region have adversely affected the development process in a number of ESCWA countries, rendering urgent the need for the evaluation of national financial systems with regard to mobilization, management and allocation of financial resources and the formulation of appropriate policy measures.

34.95 The end of the era of "high" oil revenues in ESCWA oil-exporting countries and of the associated spillovers from these countries to ESCWA non-oil-exporting countries, and the subsequent drop in available financial resources in both groups of countries [a need is felt for promoting more efficient mobilization, management and allocation of financial and economic resources and for designing realistic policies of development planning and management] - accentuated by the Gulf crisis - call for an increasing awareness at the national policy-making level of the need to promote diversification of national income sources.

34.96 Some countries of the ESCWA region are facing serious external debt problems. Although these countries have been able to reschedule part of their debt, they are facing difficulties in generating the financial resources needed to service the debt, thus postponing the problem. These difficulties have been aggravated by the Gulf conflict, which has reduced resources available for development in the donor countries themselves and for aid to other countries in need.

34.97 The Gulf Cooperation Council has initiated many steps to advance financial, monetary and economic cooperation among its members. [The recently established Arab Cooperation Council is also aspiring to strengthen similar areas of cooperation among its members.] These developments have a far-reaching impact on the economies of the region. Examination and analysis of the developments and the obstacles confronted are of major importance.

34.98 The establishment of a well-functioning government aiming at achieving satisfactory results in public administration and finance at the multisectoral as well as the regional level within each country is still hindered by many obstacles, most important among which are the lack of expertise and an inadequate institutional infrastructure. Coping with regional and international developments that affect economic development in ESCWA member countries requires a flexible and efficient public administration to ensure the continuity and improvement of service delivery.

34.99 The objective of the subprogramme is to examine and assess national and regional efforts in resource mobilization, management and allocation; and [. More specifically, the objective is] to seek means to address such issues as external debt, adjustment policies and privatization, and to examine and assess monetary and financial cooperation among [the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council] member countries. The subprogramme is also concerned with the analysis and examination of policy issues and problems related to public finance and management in ESCWA member countries and their effects on the economic development of these countries. More specifically the aims of the subprogramme are:

(a) To assess and examine monetary, fiscal and financial policies in the region and contribute to the formulation of adequate policy measures;

(b) To contribute to the establishment of a framework for the efficient mobilization, management and allocation of domestic financial resources;

(c) To contribute to increased awareness at the national as well as regional policy-making levels of the importance of capital flows among ESCWA member countries as well as financial and monetary cooperation;

(d) To assess and evaluate the role of national financial systems and regional development finance institutions in financing development;

(e) To contribute to the formulation of policy measures addressing external debt problems, structural adjustment and privatization, reform of public sector enterprises and government financial management;

(f) To contribute to improving public administration and management.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.100 The activities of the secretariat under subprogramme 10 are based largely on research and publication of reports or studies. Technical assistance will be provided upon request by member countries. The issues to be covered during the three bienniums of the medium-term plan are:

(a) The monitoring of fiscal and monetary developments and trends in the ESCWA region;

(b) Development finance planning and management in selected ESCWA countries;

(c) Financial, monetary and economic cooperation in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council;

(d) Investment incentives in selected ESCWA countries;

(e) Management of financial institutions in the ESCWA region;

(f) External debt [and financial and economic] management in selected ESCWA countries;

(g) Multisectoral public administration in selected ESCWA countries;

(h) Management and organization of government in selected ESCWA countries.

SUBPROGRAMME 11. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(a) Objectives

34.101 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 34/218, 41/65, [41/160,] 42/180, 42/192, 43/56, 43/184, 43/443, 44/14, section B, paragraphs 1 to 4, and 45/199, annex, paragraphs 56 to 61.

34.102 The ESCWA region is facing a crucial need for the endogenization of its science and technology activities. Most of the issues and problems addressed in the Vienna Conference on Science and Technology for Development a decade ago remain valid. In addition, the region now faces the challenges of new technologies and their implications. Therefore, building and strengthening endogenous science and technology capacity and infrastructure, together with improving the region's advantages in the technology transfer process, will remain the main concern of this programme.

34.103 The need to support research and development and encourage technological change and technological innovations in basic and new technologies is now well recognized in the region. There is, however, still great ambiguity with regard to policy measures and mechanisms needed to attain these objectives. Therefore, the undertaking of activities that address the problems of innovation, research and development and their linkages with the production system, as well as the commercialization of research and development activities, is planned.

34.104 One of the main features of the ESCWA region is that it comprises a number of [small] countries in which the scale of scientific and technological activities is limited in scope and coverage. Technological cooperation is therefore indicated to maximize the benefits of scientific and technological resources.

34.105 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To assist member States in identifying the requirements for formulating science and technology policies and plans within environmentally sound and sustainable development; in developing local technological capabilities for participating in all aspects of technology policies, such as assessing, negotiating, selecting, transferring, adopting and developing technology; in formulating guidelines and measures to deal with reverse transfer of technology; and in analysing and assessing the implications of new advances in technologies on their development effort;

(b) To continue the formulation of measures and mechanisms to make the process of technology transfer more effective, in particular the transfer of pollution-control technologies, which could promote a better management of environmental problems;

(c) To continue the promotion of regional cooperation among the member States, particularly in the utilization of new technologies.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.106 The secretariat will pursue the following activities under the subprogramme:

(a) Continuing to conduct in-depth studies and organizing seminars and expert group meetings to formulate appropriate technology policy recommendations;

(b) Organizing training courses for high- and middle-ranking officials and personnel in the private sectors to develop technological capabilities in

various aspects of technology policy, technology institutions and the transfer and development of technology;

(c) Promoting cooperation between ESCWA member States by formulating project proposals for cooperation in science and technology. Concrete cases will be identified with specific mechanisms to support the cooperation process;

(d) Mobilizing resources and support for the implementation of cooperation projects in the application of new technologies;

(e) Conducting studies and organizing expert group meetings in cooperation with other concerned United Nations organizations to assess the implication of new technological developments for the region;

(f) Continuing to disseminate information and distributing publications on technology to fill the existing knowledge gap in the region regarding science and technology.

SUBPROGRAMME 12. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

(a) Objectives

34.107 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/49, paragraphs 1 to 5, 43/93; paragraphs 5, 6, 8 to 10 and 15; 43/98, paragraphs 5, 6 and 9; 43/99, paragraphs 5 to 8; 43/121, paragraphs 5 and 6; 44/55; 44/56, paragraphs 8 and 12; 44/57, paragraph 3; 44/58, paragraph 2; 44/59, paragraphs 1, 4 and 8; 44/65, paragraphs 3 and 14 (c); 44/66; 44/67, paragraph 12; 44/70, paragraphs 7, 9 and 13; 44/72, 44/141, paragraphs 1 to 3 (d); 44/142 and 44/236, paragraphs 5 and 8 of the annex, [45/59] 45/87; 45/103; 45/91; 45/100; 45/106; 45/107 to 123; and 45/149; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/40, paragraph 5; 1988/46, paragraphs 4 and 5; and 1988/47, paragraphs 2 to 4; and ESCWA resolution 157 (XIV), paragraphs 2 and 3.

34.108 All the countries of the ESCWA region have [established social protection schemes and programmes] designed programmes in favour of special social groups, but these programmes vary greatly from one country to another and they have never been subjected to any critical comparative review. Thus, reasons for success and failure in the field have never been assessed. Moreover, owing to administrative and technical obstacles, the tendency to separate the social and economic dimensions in development projects often results in duplication of efforts and wastage of resources. Therefore, ESCWA member States need qualitative and quantitative social data on the dimensions of alternative developmental approaches in order to formulate sound policies and programmes on social development, with special emphasis on emerging social needs and priorities as a result of the Gulf crisis and other conflicts in the region.

34.109 The objectives of this subprogramme are:

(a) To undertake overall analysis of the impact of development trends in furthering greater participation of the entire population in the development process;

(b) To assist, through the promotion of an integrated approach to social development and welfare and the strengthening of governmental machinery and intergovernmental cooperation, in the formulation and promotion of policies and strategies aimed at the following: improving the monitoring of social and human resources development; facilitating the integration of less advantaged groups such as the disabled, the young, the elderly, the poor and the rural population in the development process; establishing comprehensive national social welfare systems; and ensuring equitable access thereto by the entire population;

(c) To analyse the impact of social changes, resulting from prevailing development and crisis, on human habitat and living conditions;

(d) To review the implementation of strategies recommended in the field of control and prevention of crime and drug abuse [and in the field of social security and social protection systems];

(e) To promote the integration of the social dimension in rural development.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.110 The social situation in the region will be monitored by the secretariat through regular review of continuously updated social indicators and periodic survey of the socio-economic landscape in the light of emerging global and regional developments. The social implications of the Gulf crisis will receive due attention. Furthermore, assistance will be rendered to Governments, upon request, to formulate social welfare programmes and projects, and to improve social planning and social monitoring methodologies through the collection and processing of social data and information conducive to policy action.

34.111 The secretariat will undertake studies and provide support to regional ad hoc expert groups with a view to examining issues related to developmental social welfare policies and programmes as well as programmes and policies dealing with prevention and control of crime and drug abuse, in order to formulate more operationally oriented and effective policies and innovative measures.

34.112 Through an intersectoral approach to rural development, the social dimensions of rural development will be examined with a view to formulating appropriate policies and programmes for rural areas that will contribute, inter alia, to the reduction of poverty and promotion of further integration of the rural population into the development process. In this context, emphasis will be placed on the role of rural institutions, particularly cooperatives. [Furthermore, as a contribution to the intersectoral social strategy of promoting the role of the Arab family in development, assessments of the changing conditions of the family and its further integration into the development process will be undertaken.]

34.113 Follow-up will continue on strategies and measures adopted at the national level in favour of less advantaged groups such as the very poor in both rural and urban areas [the disabled, the young and the elderly] (1994-1995), and attention will be given to ensuring effective access of these

groups to adequate social welfare services and their participation in the development process. Furthermore, on the basis of activities carried out under the current medium-term plan, directories and manuals will be updated and other forms of assistance will be provided, particularly in the area of transferring technology to the disabled (1992-1995).

SUBPROGRAMME 13. WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) Objectives

34.114 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 40/105, paragraphs 2 and 4; 40/108, paragraph 10; 41/111, paragraph 2; 42/178, paragraphs 3 and 8; 44/76, paragraph 3; 44/77, paragraphs 3, 5, 9, 12, 18 and 19; 45/129; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/18, paragraph 4; and 1987/122; ESCWA resolution 66 (v); ESCWA Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development in Western Asia (1975-1985); Regional Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women (1980-1985); Strategy for the Development of Arab Women in Western Asia to the Year 2000 (1984); and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985).

34.115 The major problems that are addressed in the subprogramme, and which the medium-term plan 1992-1997 is designed to alleviate, consist of the following:

(a) The difficult economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions that are faced by migrant and displaced Arab women and their families within the ESCWA region, as they deal with the realities of displacement and migration and their eventual return or resettlement as a direct result of the Gulf crisis, with all its detrimental economic and social implications for the Arab individual, the family, the community and the country;

(b) The physical, social and economic consequences of the conflict of multiple roles that is very often experienced by Arab women between women's public and familial roles, and the lack of a comprehensive solution to this problem, especially in the light of the existing economic hardships faced by the majority of Arab families, which would require more women to become heads of households and earn the main income or supplement the existing income for the survival of the family;

(c) The difficulties that women, especially migrant women, face in having access to financial and educational resources and the acquisition of skills that will allow them to achieve their immediate objective of improving their social and economic living conditions and their long-term goals that will increase their participation in the labour force, with compatibility between their public and familial roles, in order to contribute to the social and economic development of themselves as individuals and citizens and to that of their families, their communities and their nations;

(d) The obstacles faced by Arab women in organizing themselves through different grassroots modalities in order to establish local support systems that deal with their immediate needs and their long-term aspirations for a better life.

34.116 While the integration of women in development remains the main focus of the subprogramme, it takes into consideration the impact of the Gulf crisis on Arab women. The alleviation of hardships caused by dislocation and dispersal of local communities, loss of economic resources and disruption of existing social support systems will be given due attention. Special emphasis is being placed on formulating a strategy and identifying activities within its framework that would be more in harmony with the cultural setting of the region and with the social and economic changes that occurred during 1990 and 1991. More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To investigate modalities for increasing the economic participation of Arab women, including modalities for self-employment and collective micro-enterprises;

(b) To identify efficient, effective and acceptable approaches to the economic participation of Arab women that take into consideration women's familial responsibilities and economic contribution, especially in view of the increasing number of female heads of households who have to be the main earners in the family as a result of the recurrent wars in the region;

(c) To continue to assess the changing responsibilities of the Arab family, with special emphasis on displaced and migrant families and female-headed households, and to identify the institutions that would be necessary to provide alternative services and give support to the functions traditionally undertaken by the family;

(d) To formulate and promote legislation and administrative structures that are in congruence with the changing role of the Arab family and that would provide the legal context for the [different] alternative modalities available to women;

(e) To provide decision makers with recommendations for adopting innovative alternatives for Arab women within the Arab social and cultural context;

(f) To assist non-governmental women's organizations at the grassroots level to develop their support systems and to widen their popular support base in order to institutionalize collective self-help modalities;

(g) To emphasize the special role of women in the protection of the environment, taking into consideration the environmental consequences of the Gulf crisis and the magnitude and gravity of its impact on women and their families in the region;

(h) To continue to provide information on the situation of women and the Arab family in the region through situational analysis based on the continuous updating of data on women and to continue to identify the female resources available for technical assistance services through the periodical updating of the Directory of Professional Arab Women.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.117 The development of human resources will continue to be the focus of the secretariat's activities under the subprogramme. Three major areas of activity will be targeted:

(a) The first will continue to be the collection and dissemination of data on Arab women through the publication of the data sheets, the Directory of Professional Arab Women, and the results of the studies undertaken by the secretariat in the ESCWA series, Studies on Arab Women in Development. Special emphasis will be given to undertaking action-oriented studies that will assess the changing social and economic conditions of the countries of the region and their impact on women and their families within the local community context. Empirical studies, aiming at formulating specific project proposals for funding technical-assistance activities, will also be undertaken to identify the hardships encountered by women and their families who have been dislocated within the same country or from one country to another;

(b) In the second area of activity the secretariat will continue to examine, through action-oriented research, the changing role of the Arab family and will assess the institutions that provide services that are supportive and/or are a replacement of family services. Special attention will be given to the changing pattern of displaced and migrant families within the present socio-economic context of the ESCWA member States;

(c) The third area of activity is the identification of alternatives available to Arab women within the social and cultural context of the region. These would include increasing the participation of women in occupations in which they already participate in big numbers, since demand outstrips supply by far; accelerating the introduction of women's employment in occupations in which only little headway has been achieved in this respect; and increasing the economic participation of Arab women in the ESCWA region through a culturally acceptable approach that takes into account women's familial responsibilities and economic contributions. These tasks would also entail the identification of existing requirements for the adaptation of work methods to the needs of women, assessing their adaptability to the ESCWA region and, based on the above, proposing policies for appropriate modalities and the necessary prerequisites for their successful adaptation and adoption. Due attention will be given to the employment of women affected by the results of the Gulf crisis. Attention will be given to formulating projects for self-employment of women within the context of small enterprises. In essence, under this subprogramme the secretariat will be implementing the Strategy for Increasing the Economic Participation of Arab Women in Western Asia: the Third Choice, which was formulated under the previous medium-term plan.

34.118 Feasibility studies will be undertaken that will be followed by pilot activities demonstrating innovative alternatives that can be adopted by the region. These pilot activities would be within the scope of technical assistance activities provided regionally and/or nationally to test the viability of some of the modalities. Technical assistance activities will continue to be the means by which this subprogramme is implemented, since the studies that will be undertaken will lead to the formulation of specific proposals for projects to meet the needs of Arab women, especially the displaced and migrant.

SUBPROGRAMME 14. STATISTICS

(a) Objectives

34.119 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 42/5, paragraphs 5 to 7; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1985/7, paragraph 1, 1985/8 and 1988/59, paragraphs 1 and 3; and ESCWA resolutions 13 (XI) and 155 (XIV).

34.120 The shortage of trained personnel in statistics and data processing has had a serious effect on the development of statistical services in most ESCWA countries. Training should address the evolving needs of statistics and data processing in the region and compensate for the loss of trained staff from governmental statistical offices to the private sector and other governmental departments.

34.121 The use of computers for statistical purposes is expected to expand at a rapid pace in the current decade. The introduction of new information technologies, such as statistical networks, the development of database management systems and the increasing use of statistical packages, will have a far-reaching effect on the work and structure of central statistical offices.

34.122 A major problem in some of the countries of the region is the lack of in-depth analysis of the data, especially survey data, collected by the statistical offices. Another problem experienced by some ESCWA countries is the absence of coordination between the producers and users of statistics.

34.123 The problem of standardization touches upon a wide range of subjects in statistics. Continuous efforts are needed at the national and regional levels to increase the comparability of data produced by ESCWA member States.

34.124 The objective of the subprogramme is to contribute to the development of timely and relevant statistics in the ESCWA region, in cooperation with the national, regional and international bodies concerned. More specifically, the objectives include:

(a) The collection, compilation and dissemination of comparable statistics on national accounts, prices, finance, industry, energy, external trade and other economic areas;

(b) The development, collection, standardization and dissemination of environment and social statistics, including those pertaining to the situation of women, the disabled, youth, infants and other special population groups;

(c) The development of sources of population statistics, including population and housing censuses, civil registration systems and demographic and health surveys;

(d) The promotion of unified international concepts, definitions and classifications, especially those related to national accounts, international trade, industry, migration, the environment and employment;

(e) Assistance in the development of the census and survey capabilities of ESCWA member States and in the collection and analysis of socio-economic data obtained from household surveys and censuses;

(f) The improvement of statistics in terms of reliability, timeliness and comparability and application of advanced means of collecting, processing and disseminating economic and social statistics in the ESCWA region.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.125 The following activities will be undertaken under the subprogramme:

(a) Statistical training in national accounts and in specific subjects related to economic statistics, in cooperation with regional institutes and organizations;

(b) Collection and dissemination of basic statistics in the economic, demographic and social areas of the ESCWA region through recurrent general or specialized publications;

(c) Setting up and maintenance of statistical databases concerning various statistical areas for use by the ESCWA secretariat and member States, as well as by international and regional organizations;

(d) Organization of technical meetings on specific topics, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Office and regional organizations;

(e) Provision of support to technical assistance activities, in national accounts, population statistics, data processing and household surveys in ESCWA member States;

(f) Publication and dissemination of methodological statistical manuals in Arabic.

34.126 The above-mentioned activities are of a continuing nature, especially in the field of collection and dissemination of statistics. However, some issues, such as the application of the revised system of national accounts and international economic classifications, will receive special emphasis in the first half of the medium-term plan.

SUBPROGRAMME 15. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Objectives

34.127 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 39/227, paragraph 2; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1984/78, paragraph 4, and 1991/75, paragraph 4; and ESCWA resolutions 92 (VIII), paragraph 3, 138 (XII), paragraph 3, 143 (XIII), paragraph 4, and 170 (XV), paragraph 3.

34.128 Lack of coordination and planning based on an adequate database in matters relating to transport and communications among the countries of the ESCWA region, and between neighbouring countries in particular, gives rise to

misallocation of financial resources and impedes the smooth flow of passengers and goods and ease of movement and travel of individuals across the countries of the region, all of which constitute problem areas that need to be addressed.

34.129 With regard to the land-based network of the transport infrastructure and, more specifically, to road and railway networks, the problems of completing the missing links that will connect neighbouring Arab countries in the region and improving and maintaining existing links are of vital importance.

34.130 Trade in the ESCWA region is predominantly seaborne and, as a direct consequence, the competitiveness of exports from Arab countries in foreign markets depends largely on the cost of the carriage of such goods by sea. Therefore, increased attention should be paid to maritime transport and, in particular, to the development of national merchant fleets, in order to increase the share of national carriers in the external trade of Arab countries, particularly in solid or liquid bulk commodities.

34.131 Human resources in the transport sector suffer from the scarcity of trained national personnel specialized in matters relating to this sector, which range from planning to operations and management, particularly at the middle and higher levels of management. Manpower development and training problems are issues that need to be addressed.

34.132 Environmental issues in transport were given very little attention in the past. In the developed countries, transport sectors account for approximately 60 per cent of the total pollution in the atmosphere of urban areas. Some specific issues related to the effect of transport on the environment have to be given priority in the ESCWA region. These include air pollution, noise levels and safety.

34.133 With regard to the communications sector, the ESCWA region has not completed the introduction of communications technologies to develop interregional links that will ensure the region's integration at the global level. Consequently, part of the telecommunications traffic between ESCWA member countries is still routed via transit centres outside the region, thereby failing to take advantage of the available facilities in the ESCWA region.

34.134 The objective of this subprogramme is to establish connected transport and communications networks that will ensure a reliable and continuous flow of traffic among ESCWA member countries and with other regions, through integrated ESCWA regional transport policies and operations. More specifically, the objectives are the following:

(a) To assist member countries in planning the development of transport and communications facilities and in formulating integrated transport policies, including regional transport networks and multimodal operations, as well as the training of transport personnel;

(b) To improve regional land, maritime and air transport infrastructure where needed, together with operations, with particular emphasis on maintenance;

(c) To facilitate interregional and intraregional traffic and communications by harmonizing transport rules and regulations;

(d) To improve the interregional telephone infrastructure and operations;

(e) To implement the programmes of action of the Transport and Communications Decade for Western Asia;

(f) To assist member countries during the medium-term plan period to deal with anticipated problems regarding deregulation, subsidies and private financing and management of related projects.

(b) Course of action of the secretariat

34.135 The activities of the secretariat in the area of transport will concentrate on the following:

(a) Work will be initiated on the establishment of a mechanism of coordination for transport and communications development plans and policies at the ESCWA regional level and on a draft ESCWA (Arab) transport convention, as well as the establishment of an ESCWA regional transport training institute. Emphasis will be placed on manpower training and comparative analysis of transport development plans in ESCWA member countries, as well as on the maintenance of the existing [transport] infrastructure. These actions will be carried out through surveys and studies, by convening ad hoc expert group and intergovernmental meetings, and by conducting training courses and advisory missions;

(b) Surveys and studies on the formulation of a master plan for the establishment of ESCWA regional transport networks, as well as the consolidation of transport bridges through [specific] projects between the Mashreq and the Maghreb countries, will be initiated with a view to having the master plan completed;

(c) The identification, formulation and preparation of regional and subregional programmes and projects for ESCWA regional merchant fleet and port development will be carried out and finalized;

(d) Work will be initiated on the impact of the deregulation aspect on subsidy policies in the transport sector adopted by the countries of the region, as will measures to encourage the private sector to participate in financing and management of transportation and communications projects;

(e) Studies and field surveys will be conducted in order to determine exact degrees of transport pollution where such data are not available. Ad hoc meetings will be held in order to prepare standards, with the objectives of both curtailing the degree of transport-related pollution and improving transport safety;

(f) The implementation, finalization and follow-up of the programmes and projects for the Transport and Communications Decade for Western Asia, including the full establishment of the Trans-Arab Corridors, will be conducted. Research and technical assistance activities, as well as support

for negotiations (pledging conferences, inter-agency meetings, etc.) for the Decade's investment programmes, will be undertaken.

34.136 The activities of the secretariat in the area of communications (telecommunications and postal services) will focus on the preparation of plans and programmes to link the ESCWA region with the other regions. These activities and, in particular, the improvement of telephone-switching centres will be tackled within the framework of the Transport and Communications Decade for Western Asia.

34.137 The secretariat will continue to publish annually data on the transport and communications sector (networks, capacity and utilization). Cooperation and coordination of activities with other regional and international organizations will be strengthened.